

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

Date: June 11, 2008

To: The Governing Board Members

From:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP/ASLA (Hon), Executive Officer

Subject: **Agenda Item XII: Discussion and possible action regarding State Route 91 Corridor Improvement Project proposed by Riverside County Transportation Commission including (a) appointing a member and alternate to attend the Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings, and (b) authorizing staff to write a comment letter on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Chairperson's signature when the NOP/NOI is released.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board (a) appoint a member and alternate to attend the Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings for the State Route 91 Corridor Improvement Project, and (b) authorize staff to write a comment letter on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Chairperson's signature when the NOP/NOI is released.

Background: The Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) is proposing the State Route 91 Corridor Improvement Project in partnership with several other transportation agencies, cities, and counties. The project focuses on increasing capacity on an existing 12-mile stretch on the SR-91 from SR-241 to Pierce Street in the City of Riverside. One alternative will add one general purpose lane in each direction maintaining the existing High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane. The other alternative will add one general purpose lane and replace the existing HOV lane with the two toll lanes in each direction. More information can be found on the project website at www.sr91project.info. One aspect of the project that pertains to WCCA's interests is proposed lanes at, and the potential impact to, California State Parks land and the Coal Canyon wildlife crossing.

There are numerous improvements planned to address congestion on the 91, with various agencies taking the lead including improving the 71/91 interchange and improving the 241/91 interchange. In addition, the WCCA Board adopted a comment letter (September 27, 2007) to Orange County Transportation Authority on the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the State Route 91 Eastbound Lane Addition Project between SR 241 and SR 71.

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WCCA has been invited to participate in the Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings. The meetings are anticipated to occur approximately every three months on a weekday afternoon in Corona (see meeting schedule at www.sr91project.info). The Board may wish to designate a WCCA representative (e.g., WCCA Advisory Committee member, WCCA Board member, or WCCA alternate Board member), and alternate, to attend the stakeholder meetings to share WCCA's perspectives on the project and to report back to the WCCA Board on the outcome of the meetings. For a related study, the Riverside County-Orange County Major Investment Study, the WCCA Board previously appointed Advisory Committee member Claire Schlotterbeck as the WCCA representative and Advisory Committee member Bob Turner as the alternate.

The NOP/NOI may be released for public comment soon. The NOP/NOI scoping meeting is scheduled for June 24 in Corona at City Hall at 400 S. Vicentia, 5:00-8:00 pm. If possible, staff would bring the comment letter to the Board for consideration within the timeframe for comment. However, it may not be possible to arrange a WCCA meeting in time to comment. As such, the Board may wish to authorize staff to write a comment letter on the NOP/NOI for the Chairperson's signature when the NOP/NOI is released. The comment letter would request extraordinary design considerations to protect the Coal Canyon wildlife crossing and appropriate mitigation measures. The letter would request a complete analysis of cumulative environmental impacts associated multiple freeway improvement projects and projects affecting the Santa Ana River, and it would request mitigation where appropriate.